

Cage 7 Parrot

Polly Wanna Crackup?

The parrot is famous for mimicry. You can never really get anything out of a parrot that you have not put there first. You'll never learn anything about the parrot from what it says—it will just repeat back to you what you said.

Parrots don't make statements, they only ask questions. They use questions to avoid exposing anything about themselves. A person can hide behind a question without having to expose what he really feels or thinks. And, if you only ask questions, you have a very nice technique for avoiding arguments. If someone does happen to become hot under the collar the parrot can back off with "I. Was just asking, that's all."

On the other hand, by playing the parrot you can manipulate the other person into all kinds of disclosures which you can use to maintain your safe relationship. A statement is a commitment—sit says something about you. A question, however, can be phrased in a neutral fashion. It doesn't have to indicate where you stand at all. Answering questions with questions is in some ways the safest of all safe relationships.

At work the parrot loves studies—that is why he makes such a good

bureaucrat. If he is subtle enough, the parrot can be quite a likable guy.

That's because everyone knows so little about him that there is nothing

to dislike. The parrot, however, can also be extremely annoying. He rarely gives directions on a project and waits until you finish; then he asks you why you did it the way you did. People who work for a parrot feel as though they are never quite sure what they are supposed to be doing, and for what reason. Some people at work like to rationalize their parrot by calling it the Socratic method. These people are called teachers.

If you are especially good at being a parrot, you might be called a newscaster, an interviewer, an attorney, or a bureaucrat.

At home the main task of the parrot is to ask questions to avoid expressing a personal preference. "What do you want for dinner?" Parrot: "I don't know, what do you want?" The parrot takes every statement and turns it into a question.

Instead of "I would like to go to a movie tonight, would you like to go to one also?" the parrot says: "Would you like to go to a movie?" Instead of "I think we need new drapes in the living room," it's "Do you think we need new drapes in the living room?" Instead of "Debbie, you left your skates on the stairs, please go get them," it's "Debbie, didn't you forget something on the stairs?"

If the parrot ever has a preference, or a want, or a desire, or even an idea the most you are ever going to know about it is what you can infer from his questions. He will always go along. Anything is OK with him as long as he can avoid an argument.

And finally we have the listener parrot. He is the parrot that women and Dale Carnegie graduates are always told to be; he spends all his time asking questions in order to draw you out while he appears to listen with interest. The main thing the parrot wants to avoid is any sort of personal commitment or self-disclosure. Whether he is repeating other people's opinions, or citing endless statistics from the newspaper, or changing his mind to meet the situation, or simply just keeping his mouth shut and listening, the parrot will maintain his safe relationship.